

THE

# BENT SPOON



DENVER UFO

# THE BENT SPOON

In the landscape of paranormal media, there are traditionally two unique, yet separate, brands. One geared toward the believers, and the other more skeptical in nature. The problem is that the true believers rarely, if ever, embrace a skeptical attitude or ask tough questions of their community; instead preferring to surround themselves with like-minded individuals that reinforce their own belief systems. And the skeptics, likewise, promote science and critical thinking largely to those already open to it, or who are active participants in the skeptical community. This results in an echo chamber effect, wherein the same ideas are bounced back and forth, guru-student relationships are inadvertently created, and neither side ends up learning much about the other.

Enter: The Bent Spoon.

The Bent Spoon is a skeptical magazine for the true believer. Within its pages you will find Q&A between those with opposing viewpoints, interviews with leading investigators and thinkers, as well as articles which will not only provide in-depth analysis, but also be critical of both believers and skeptics alike. Along with reviews, comic strips, and other lighter fare, The Bent Spoon hopes to foster an attitude of outreach, forming a middle ground where believers and skeptics can come together and have a conversation about the issues and questions we've all given thought to.

*The Bent Spoon. Where extraordinary claims meet ordinary explanations.*



Created by Bobby Nelson & Nicholas Callis

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# A ghost box prediction? Not so much.

Bobby Nelson



The other day I received an email from my buddy Steve Hill. Steve, a self proclaimed “electronic medium,” believes he has been getting a possible “Doomsday” prediction transmitted to him through the ghost box.

For those who do not know what a ghost box is, simply put, it is nothing more than a broken radio. A controversial tool (and I use that word loosely), though rejected by many believers of paranormal phenomena, does seem to have its followers. The way this device works is fairly simple, you take an ordinary radio and find the mechanism which allows it to scan different channels and manipulate it so it continuously scans, never stopping – some call it a mute pin, which can be disabled by simply bending it. Other devices can get more complicated, ghost boxes such as the mini box have crystal enhancements (which literally means absolutely nothing) that can range in price from anywhere to \$800 to \$1,500. And of course there is the most coveted of all ghost boxes, the Franks Box, created by the father of ghost box “research” – Frank Sumption.

Now when these devices are working, people using them claim to get messages from the other side. The users have to decipher the messages and figure out the difference between voices that are products of songs, commer-

cials, talk radio, news, etc...and which voices are those of a spirit guide delivering important messages. However, there is no process in determining which voices are from the other side. We have to take the word of the individual using the box to conclude if contact has indeed been made.

Steve Hill is no exception to this rule. Once Steve has decided that the box has given him an authentic message, his mind has been made up and no amounts of logic and reasoning will change that. He hides behind absurd arguments such as: “Bobby, science can’t explain everything.” In which I constantly have to explain that this argument from certitude is more than ridiculous, that science never makes the claim of knowing everything and science doesn’t make claims of certainty. However, Steve will hear none of that. He constantly shifts the burden of proof by saying: “Bobby, can you explain how I get such clear responses?” Clear responses? are they really clear responses? Well, I decided to find out just how clear they really were.

Now, when I deal with Steve, he always primes me to hear what he is hearing and 99% of the time it works. I have told him many times, when sending me audio, please don’t name the file something relevant to the voice you are hearing and don’t tell me what it is saying...again, this suggestion

goes unheard. So I do the only thing I can think of. Ask random people what they can hear.

I have to make it known, that even when I can show that people do not hear the same thing Steve thinks/says the box is saying, it has no bearing whatsoever in changing his mind. Steve is so committed in the thought process that what he says the box is saying, that is what it is saying. I do, in fact, show the results to Steve, but I mostly do these little tests to show other individuals that these ghost box voices are not as clear as you may think they are. Again, I have to reiterate, the clip I was given, I was primed...I was told every word the clip was saying as it was being said. This means, I heard exactly what Steve heard, but only because I was told what to hear.

The specific “doomsday” prediction clip was said to be saying: Change...Prepare...An Event...An Event...Will Lead...An Event...Urgent...Evil (Steve saying: “What’s Evil?”)...Massive...War...Bombing...Israel Fallen. Steve believed this to be a prediction of the fall of Israel. No dates or time as to when the impending doom would strike.

The first thing I noticed was that the only word that was extremely clear was the word, “event.” And the word was said a couple times as it clicked along the different channels. I asked Steve what day the audio was recorded and he said,

this past Friday, December 14th, 2012. The day the news on the radio would be reporting about a specific evil event that occurred in Connecticut (we need not go into details). I brought that to his attention and explained that it was most likely an announcer, Steve had an interesting response, “yes, from the beyond.”

Steve also brought it my attention that others in the same field of pseudoscientific research of the ghost box were nay saying the “doomsday” prediction clip, saying that it was nothing more than an announcer or fragments of a news clip. For once I was in agreement with the ghost box community. However, Steve chalked this up to jealousy. He said that he acquired clear transmissions, way clearer than the people who criticize him and they were sore about it.

And though I heard what Steve told me to hear, I had to test this for myself. I actually made a prediction myself. I had told Steve, the only thing people are going to hear the same is the word event; the rest will be all over the place. I wasn’t far off from that prediction. I sent the clip out to about 30 people and asked them to write down what they heard. Unfortunately only about 12 have responded as of now and for purposes of this article, I couldn’t wait any longer for responses.

**Person 1: An Event...  
Pair... Will Leave... Doomsday...  
Which... Evil... Bobby**

**Person 2: An Event...An  
Event...An Event...Will Leave...  
Sea Urchin...Evil**

**Person 3 - Transcribe 1: Think...  
A Pair...And A Net...Believe...  
Do Not Shit...Evil Trunk...(Boss  
Evil)...We Will...Four**

**Transcribe 2: Think...Prepare...**

**And A Net...Believe...Do Not  
Shit...Evil To...(Boss Evil)...**

**Four**

**Transcribe 3: Think...Prepare...**

**And A New...Further That...**

**We Will Leave...Do Notion...**

**Evil To...Trump...(Boss Evil)...**

**(Four)...Evil...Four...Do**

**Person 4: Change...Prepared...**

**An Event...Part Of That...Will**

**Lead...An Event...A Chip...**

**Bitch...Be...Be Able To...”What’s**

**Able”...Measured...For...”For”...**

**Body...Behold...Hard...and the**

**last is just syllables I can’t make**

**out.**

**Person 5: Ping...A Pair...An**

**Event...An Event...One Weed...**

**Hello Stick...An R Chip...**

**Bitch...Emos...Four...And**

**Alright...And there was a few in-**

**stances where it just sounded like**

**unintelligible blurting to me.**

**Person 6: Change...Up Here...**

**Main Event...Heart Attack...**

**Will Lead...That Was Good...**

**War...Control.**

**Person 7: Changed...Repaired...**

**Might Have Missed...Or Does**

**That...Little League...You Don’t**

**Say...The Orchard...Switch...**

**Swiveled...(What’s Evil?)...**

**That’s What...War (Maybe**

**Four)...All Of.**

**Person 8: Change...A Pair...**

**An Event...Will Leap...Out Of**

**Here...Hey Hot Chick...Hey**

**Evil...Wolfly...More...Beaker**

**Referral...Bowling Shock...**

**Hmm.**

**Person 9: Hello...In Pairs...And**

**A Vest...Book!...And A Desk...**

**Whirlwind...Pick Up Sticks...Hey,**

**Archer...Bitch...Dip- Deevult(?)...**

**(Man Talks Over This Part)...**

**For...Bobby...Default...Boland...**

**Chk...Rip.**

**Person 10: Change...Prepare...**

**An event...Will Leap ???...**

**Able...For. ..Bobby...Israel ???**

**Person 11: Pair...Main**

**Event...???...Little League...**

**Potato Chip...Bitch...Able...**

**”What’s Abel?”...For...Bobby.**

**Person 12: Strange...A Pair...**

**An Event...Heart Attack...Build-**

**ing...Potato Chip...E-Volt?..**

**War...Mullet.**

As you can see, the answers are all over the place. So, what does this mean? That is a good question. I can’t prove that a broken radio is not making predictions; maybe the ghost box was warning us of some bombing event that will take place in Israel... Who knows? However if Israel did get bombed, could we consider that a legitimate hit for the ghost box? It might sound impressive but Israel gets bombed almost daily...literally. From January 2012 to November 2012, over 2,256 rockets had been launched at Israel from Gaza. So, unfortunately a bombing in Israel isn’t an uncommon occurrence. The only thing this test proves is that these “clear”, fragmented voices people hear on the broken radio ghost box may not be saying what you think they are saying.

To hear the audio yourself, go to:  
<https://soundcloud.com/thebent-spoon/audio-file-001>

Sources:

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# SOUPERNATURAL

BY JASON KORBUS



## “The Cost of Not Being Skeptical”

Amateur paranormal investigators love to find what they consider to be evidence of ghosts at private residences and businesses all across the country. EMF spikes, EVP, and a variety of creepy feelings and photographic anomalies all pass as proof positive of a haunting in their minds. But what happens when they find out the location they deemed haunted had been pulling the wool over their eyes? What do they do when they find out their haunt was hoaxed?

That’s a question some of these folks may have to start asking themselves if Aron Houdini has his way. Houdini, a distant relative by marriage of the legendary magician; and a conjurer and escape artist in his own right, recently took to his Facebook page to announce that he had proof positive of Poasttown Elementary, a so-called



Aron Houdini

haunted location, faking paranormal phenomena.

Confessing that he had “seen it with (his) own eyes,” he accuses Darrell Whisman, the caretaker of Poasttown Elementary, and Jay Lynch from Hindsight Paranormal, of tricking paranormal investigators. He claims to have personally seen Mr. Whisman “purposely set a door so that it would slam shut,” both Whisman and Lynch, “create shadow figures with flashlights” and “use their cell phones to create noises” that investigators would mistake for EVPs. He also claims to have witnessed each of them stand in rooms “using open air vents to send noises to other rooms,” flip light switches and breakers on and off, and use night vision cameras to watch people in the dark so they can avoid being caught. And that’s only the tip of the iceberg. Several other people who have witnessed similar things have also released statements.

But perhaps the most stunning allegation to many ghost hunters was the information that no adult or child has ever died on the property. This must come as a shock to the many who have seen the documentary from the Booth Brothers and Keith Age that has helped perpetuate this apparent myth. What about all the “voiceless children” DVD buyers were so happy they gave a voice to? Apparently, they never existed.

Despite their alarmingly unscientific

methods, many ghost hunters pride themselves in their pursuit of the truth, and in helping people understand the nature of the spirit world. Though skeptics have long realized that the claimed “proof” of ghosts is really no more than proof they don’t know what they are doing, I think it’s fair to say that many ghost hunters have their hearts in the right place. I also think it’s fair to say they have their heads up their rears, especially when it comes to situations like Aron Houdini is referring to. The ghost hunters, it seems, consider themselves to be the victims in this ordeal.

Commenting on Aron’s Facebook page, Allen Dunski, lead investigator and tech manager for Wisconsin Paranormal Investigators said, “People pay good (money) to go to events and haunted locations to experience something, not to be made to look like a fool.” Another ghost hunter going by the name of Blade Sighters wrote, “I would thank you for letting me know that I was fooled. And as for the people that fooled me, well, we will leave it at that.” Their comments were typical, though some were much more harsh. What very few, if any of them seemed to understand or want to admit, however, was that it was ghost hunters just like them ultimately responsible for the con continuing in the first place.

Solid scientific investigative techniques expose fraud. Unscientific nonsensical methods help perpetuate



### Whisman

the fraud. The fact is, these teams go into locations like Poasttown looking to find ghosts and anything they can't immediately explain away becomes, in their mind, evidence of ghosts. They go through the motions of what they consider to be an investigation, call the location haunted, and share their "evidence" with other people and teams in the paranormal community. Those folks then check the location out for themselves, making the same mistakes the last group did. More "proof" of ghosts is found and the legend grows. Soon, the place is charging obscene amounts of money for ghost tours and renting the place out to would-be investigators. It's an ongoing cycle. The hoaxers don't even have to bother recreating the effects any longer. The eager investigators are more than happy to find ghosts in blurry photographs, hear them in the white noise from their recordings, and feel them in the tingle up their spine. All they need is a story to start them off and their lack of critical thinking will do the rest.

In my opinion, the ghost hunting groups who validate the hauntings are just as responsible, if not more so, than the locations engaging in fakery in the first place. Their unscientific methodology and disregard for skepticism and critical thinking has helped propagate an innumerable amount of false hauntings across the country and

around the world. Who can say how many dollars hoaxed haunts have brought in with the help of testimonials from ignorant ghost hunters? That's the kind of stuff that keeps skeptics up at night.

But there is another important question the amateur groups don't seem to be asking themselves, and it isn't going to help skeptics sleep any easier. It's this: if ghost hunters believe they captured evidence of the paranormal at a location they now admit was not haunted, what does that say about the evidence they captured at any other location? Their EVPs, EMF spikes, orb photos and creepy feelings don't amount to a hill of beans anyway, but if they can be captured at one location without ghosts, it is simply further proof that ghost hunters have been spinning their wheels with their unscientific protocols. How many clients have these teams unwittingly misled into believing their homes were haunted by using the same techniques? How much unnecessary fear have they caused?

The fact is that amateur ghost hunting teams copy their methods from television and have fooled themselves into believing they are acting scientifically. They clearly do not know how to use their equipment, and seem to have very little idea about the natural means that explain EMF spikes, EVPs, photo anomalies and, yes, even the creepy feelings. Ghost hunters work backwards from a conclusion, going in believing there are ghosts present, then go about labeling any natural

phenomena they can't explain as proof of ghosts. It is not scientific, it is not logical, and it is unfortunately all too common.

So what will become of Poasttown? My guess is they will experience a fair amount of backlash for a short period, then things will pretty much go back to normal. Many teams that have been there before will return, believing their old evidence to be legitimate. And new groups will file in and out, finding what they wrongly believe to be evidence of ghosts as well. The cycle will continue, if not at Poasttown, then at another location up the road.

Besides, does the fact that the people they trusted were fooling them really bother amateur paranormal investigators all that much? The anger doesn't seem to last long. After all, TAPS was caught faking evidence on live television, and their ratings are as high as ever.

Thanks for reading.



# Dead End Dialogue

Nick Callis



You may have noticed that our main goal at the Bent Spoon is to promote conversation between the believers and skeptics of the paranormal community, we like to mention that from time to time. If you belong to one of the aforementioned groups, you may have also noticed how frustrating these conversations can be. Being of the skeptical persuasion, I have had a number of mind-numbing debates that left me genuinely annoyed. As, I'm sure, you, the reader, have as well. This is a huge obstacle. As a writer for the Bent Spoon, my objective is to create new paths around this obstacle, so instead of viewing this article as callous, see it as an opportunity to progress and reciprocate. With that, on to the subject.

This is a list of my least favorite responses I receive when discussing the paranormal, a cop-out compilation.

**Number one:** "Science can't explain everything". This one really gets under my skin. Science is not a noun, it's a verb despite what the dictionary might say. Science is not a person that makes claims or is wrong, it's

an action, a process, a method of investigating, fine tuned for eliminating errors and biases. Everything we know about the world around us was learned by using science.

**Number two:** "We're not trying to prove anything to anyone." Really? Is that why we're having this discussion? Is that why your group posts pictures, videos and EVPs on your website from the frequent investigations you participate in? Next!

**Number three:** "skeptics are just closed minded". I think everyone is close minded to an extent, but I think that close mindedness has become a misattributed trait of skeptics when it can easily be said about believers as well. As my friend Bobby Nelson enjoys pointing out, most believers are so steadfast in their beliefs, they openly admit that there is nothing that would make them reconsider them. That is the very definition of being close minded.

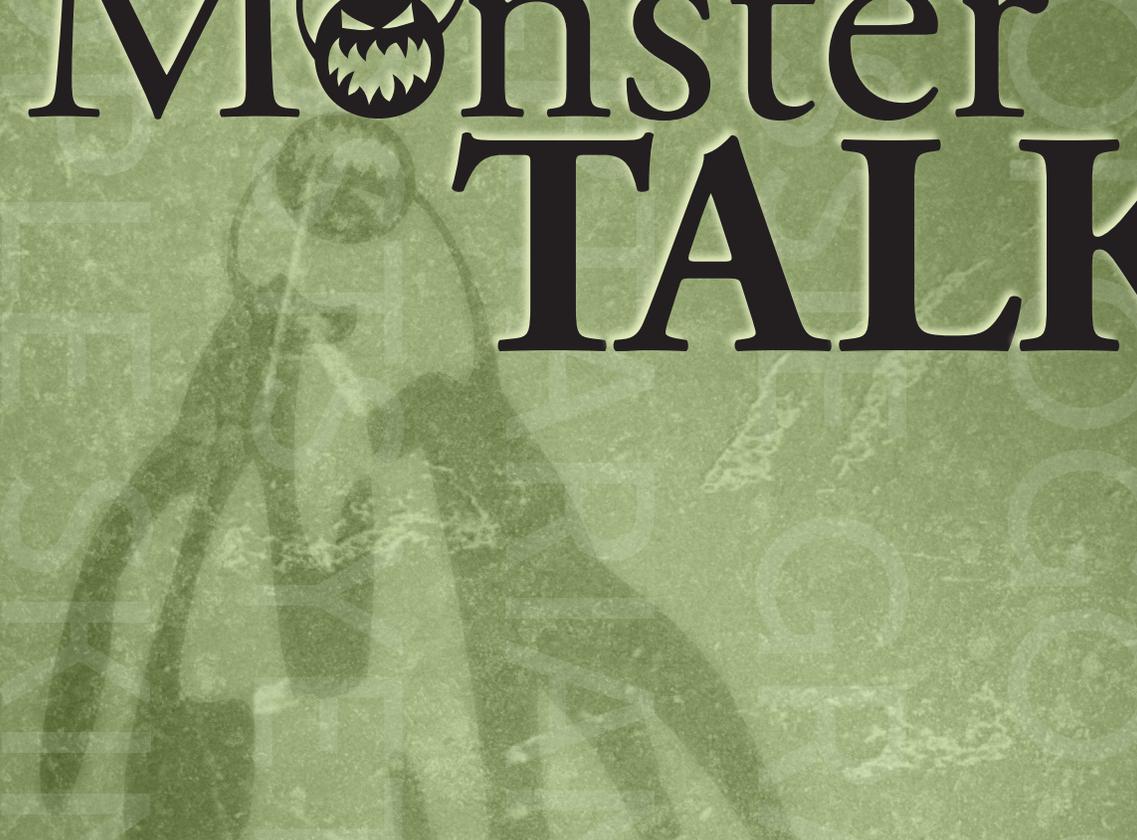
**Number four:** "we're just collecting data". Data is factual information used as a basis for reasoning or calculation. There

is no purpose for "Just collecting" it How do these EMF spikes relate to paranormal phenomena and how can you prove that correlation?

**Number five:** "These are all just theories". a theory is the closest thing to fact as possible. It is a hypothesis that has been thoroughly tested and has gone through the peer review process. The "stone tape theory" is just something someone made up. Theories are not wild, baseless guesses.

I have more examples, but I think my point has been made. Hopefully you've made it through this brief article without thinking any worse of me. As I said before, this isn't intended to be mean-spirited, it's supposed to inspire you to make your own list and let us know what you're tired of hearing. Let's all stop having the same old, tired conversations and move forward. Let's actually learn from each other.

# Monster TALK



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# GUEST SUBMISSION

## Investigative or Indifferent: The FOX Denver UFO Video by Bryan Bonner

On November 11 Denver's FOX 31 News channel broadcast a story claiming that UFOs had been video recorded landing, taking off and flying around the downtown Denver area.

A person who stated that they did not want to be identified in the News broadcast provided this video to FOX News. His claims were that the video shows images of UFOs that "cannot be seen by the naked eye" but when the video is slowed down the images of the UFOs can be seen. The person who provided the video also claims that he can see "fire" coming from the "UFOs" where their engines would be.

The news report included "expert testimony" from an aviation expert. He stated in the report that the objects in the video were not any type of plane or helicopter, it was then stated by the reporter that he did not think that the objects were bugs either. She even went as far as to say, "don't say bugs" to her fellow anchors.

When we saw the video of the reported UFO, we immediately contacted Heidi Hemmat the Investigative reporter that broke the story.

Our e-mail said: "It seems that there is evidence in the piece you aired as to what the objects were and an aviation expert would

have been the last person to catch it because of the criteria they in particular look for to make their determination. If you truly want this mystery solved, give us a call."

Her only reply to the e-mail was: "Are you going to say bugs?"

At this point we replied again: "Are you going to prove that it is not bugs? The evidence is in the footage you posted. I'm sure that the UFOs will now decide that it is too cold to fly around for the camera now. Your remarks of "don't say bugs" on the newscast with no supporting evidence is irresponsible journalism at best and not representative of an investigative reporter. I implore you to correct this because it comes across as sensationalism being favored over facts. I realize that I may have now removed any chance of showing the facts of this case by challenging your ego. I hope you decide to pick one thing in this email to prove me wrong on."

Her response to the e-mail was: "Geez, the tone of your email is not very nice. I'm not sure what I did to deserve that. I don't appreciate the ego comment. You don't know me. I'm not looking to pick a fight; the aviation expert said it was not bugs. Thanks for your feedback."

Because of this interaction with the reporter we decided that any further communication would be useless, so we decided to continue with a complete investigation of the claims made by the FOX News report.

The initial investigation looked into the area and any possible indigenous life in the area that might be mistaken for a "UFO" if photographed properly. We noted several different types of bird and insect that frequent the area. We also discovered multiple wildlife areas with large bodies of water located between the location where the video was recorded at and the "landing area" that would support these birds and insects. The initial thoughts were that birds and insects could include Flies, Wasps, Bees, Grasshoppers, Canadian Geese, Cormorants, White Pelicans and Great Blue Herons. The time that the original video was recorded was between 11:30 and 1:30 which is the same time that local migrating birds are active and the warmest part of the day when insects are most active.

We then analyzed the video from the FOX News broadcast in an attempt to see any possible explanations. We concluded that the objects in the video appeared to be small objects close to the lens and birds at a distance. This conclu-

sion was made because the objects claimed to be “UFO’s” would be in focus if they were at the distance that they were reported to be. This causes the object in the video to appear large because of its proximity to the lens and apparent supersonic speed due to the short distance needed to travel across the frame when the object is close to the lens. We also noticed what appears to be a birds wings flapping on one of the objects. We also discovered that the “fire” coming from the object was a highlight on the object caused by a sunlight reflecting on it when the object moves. The highlight is bright enough that it overexposes causing it to wash out and creating the “flame” that FOX News reports.

The second part of the investigation was to visit the site and see

what could be observed from the location where the original video was recorded.

When we arrived at the location there were 15-20 cars parked in the “no parking” area in front of the field featured in the FOX News report. The field was covered with people (30-50) with video cameras and binoculars. Some had even brought lawn chairs to see the UFO’s that they had watched on the FOX News report. The crowd of people had gathered around 11:30 and left promptly at 1:30 because that is the time the FOX News report said that the videos had been recorded.

We came to the location armed with HD video cameras, still cameras, field guides to insects and birds, binoculars and even a

documented about 45 minutes of footage. While the cameras were recording we collected several different types of flying insects that we would identify later.

The insects were identified as: Green Peach Aphid – *Myzus perineae*, Damsel bug – *Nabis americana*, Dung beetle – *Aphodius districts*, Blow fly – *Calliphoridae* dipera, Black fly – *Simulium* and the Green tree hopper – *Atymna innata*. This added six more flying insects to the list of possible explanations to the unknown objects.

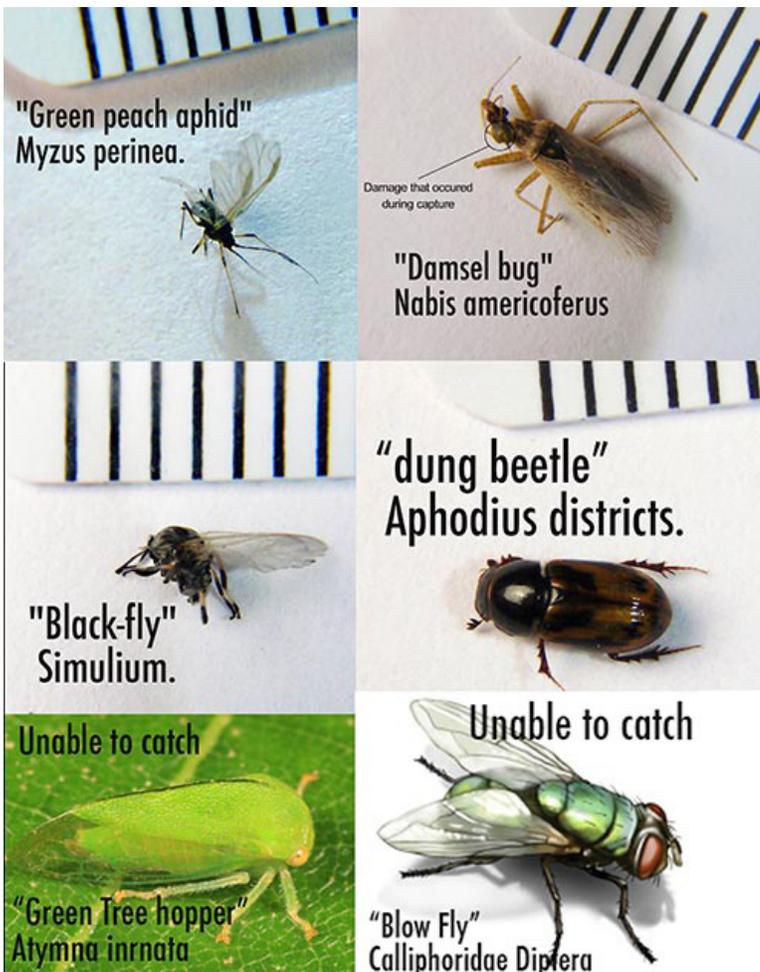
The next part of the investigation was to analyze our own video of the area. We noticed several birds of the video that looked very similar to the original FOX News video.

bug net. This was something that the crowd did not expect and said that they had noticed bugs in the area but were looking for UFOs.

We followed up the next day with another onsite visit. This time we set up a video camera and placed a 24x36in green card 5 feet in front of it. We recorded for about 10 minutes and accomplished capturing a one second clip of an insect flying between the camera and the green card. This footage is only 5 frames and can only be seen when the video is played at a slow speed. This shows that the original claims of the FOX News video can be replicated with an insect.

We set up 3 cameras looking in the same direction as the FOX News video, separated by about 5 feet and

At this point FOX News did another report about the UFO and brought in an Entomologist to examine the footage. The Entomologist stated that she did not think that the video was of an insect. The video that she looked at was of an out of focus blob in the frame. We thought that it was odd to have an expert in Butterflies and arachnids look at a blurry image and attempt



to identify it as anything.

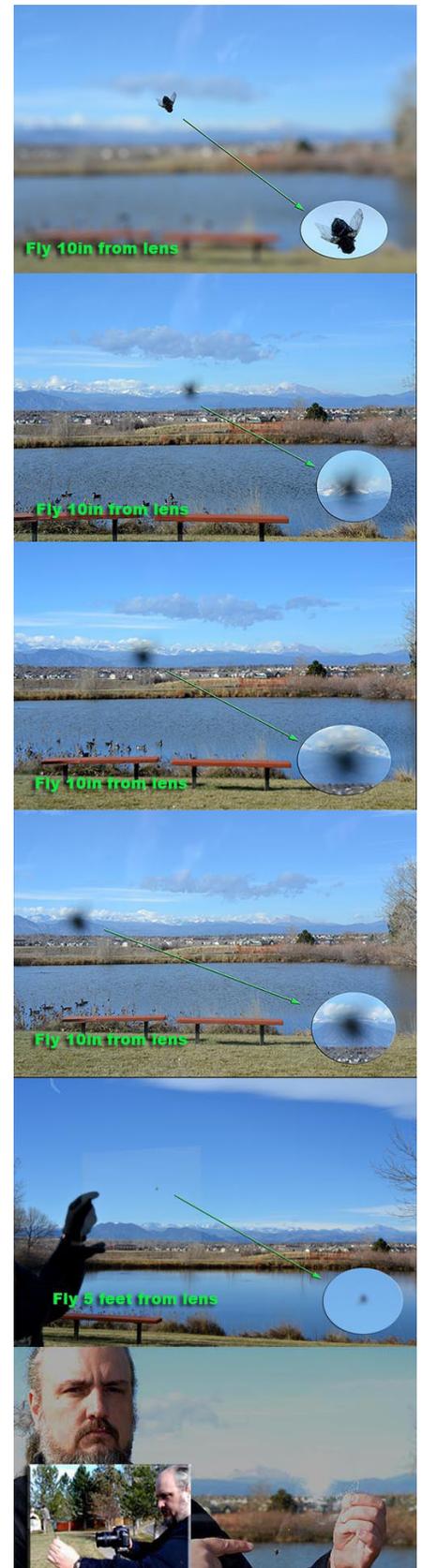
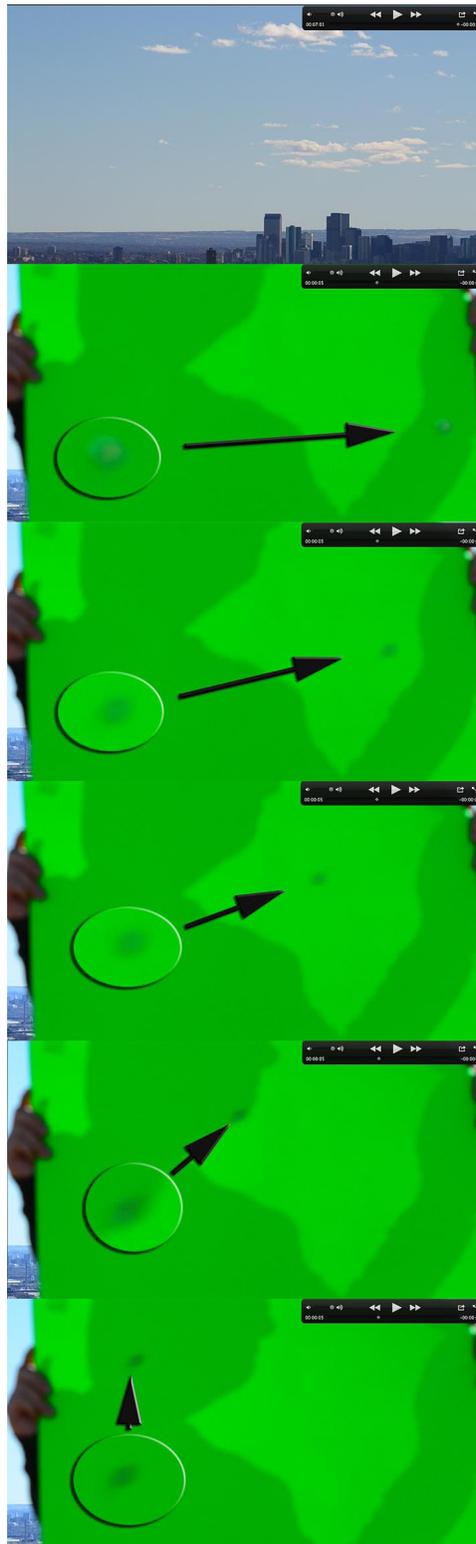
The next step was to attempt to replicate the original video using a fly mounted on a piece of glass placed in front of a video camera. The video was recorded placing the fly close to the lens and about 10 feet away from the lens. The final video showed very similar results. The fly moving near the lens across the field of view cannot be seen but when it is slowed down it can be seen. Just like the original FOX News video.

While investigating this story the original FOX News video was featured on CNN, MSNBC, YAHOO News and was going viral on YouTube.

We contacted FOX News with all of our findings but they did not appear to be interested in talking to us. It is obvious that they are not interested in following up on a story with claims that the original report that they aired was inaccurate. We also discovered that this story aired during a very important Nielsen sweeps time.

We were guided to these conclusions by using the principle or Occam's Razor, which states that given multiple answers (all things being equal) the simpler explanation is usually the correct one. The explanation being a native bird/insect or an Extraterrestrial visitor in their spaceship that was not noticed by anyone but a person who was trying to find a UFO seems to have an obvious answer.

This case is a classic example of how the media is willing to put critical thinking and common sense aside when they are attempting to increase ratings.



# THE BENT SPOON

Here at The Bent Spoon we always appreciate feedback, whether it be criticisms, compliments or suggestions. The Bent Spoon also accepts article submissions but they do not necessarily have to be from a skeptical viewpoint. If you are a true believer and love to write, The Bent Spoon's new section titled "The Open Forum" may just be the place for you. With the intentions of keeping the dialogue open between true believers and skeptics, we feel "The Open Forum" might be the perfect opportunity to do so. It will show the believers viewpoint with at least one skeptical rebuttal.

Please send all inquiries and submissions to  
[TheBentSpoon@live.com](mailto:TheBentSpoon@live.com)

Thank you.

THE  
BENT SPOON

# A Chip off the old block

Bobby Nelson



## A Chip Off the Old Block

Earlier this month, Brian Harnois, one of the many cast members to gain quick popularity (and lose it just as quickly) off the hit TV show, Ghost Hunters and Ghost Hunter International airing on the SyFy network, left a suicide note on his Facebook page. Brian then went missing for a couple days and many people that care for him made encouraging Facebook statuses and updates. Thankfully Brian was found safely and is allegedly being treated for his episode/condition. My gripe, however, isn't with Brian. I am glad he found help and I urge anyone that is contemplating suicide to please do the same. When Brian went missing, the ghost hunting community and supporters of the ghost hunting television shows banded together and started releasing ads that looked like this:



One person, who posted images like this and made statements asking for help was “psychic” Chip Coffey. Chip Coffey got his claim to fame as being one of the main psychics on television shows such as Paranormal State and Psychic Kids: Paranormal Children, both of which aired on A&E. Chip made statements both on Facebook and Twitter, statements like “Breaking News: Brian Harnois, formerly of TV’s Ghost Hunters and Ghost Hunters International, left an apparent suicide note on Facebook and is currently missing. Please join me in praying that Brian is found safe and receives the help that he needs.” At first glance, this message seems pretty innocent; I would agree that it is. I believe wholeheartedly that Chip was being Innocent and honest. However, when we look at who it is asking for prayers that Brian would be found safe, we have to stop and ask ourselves, “Wait, Chip are you not the psychic?” Why is the psychic asking for help? Why is Chip not the help? Why was Chip Coffey, a man who claims to possess psychic powers, not calling the police himself and letting them know Brian’s whereabouts or at least letting them know if he was alive or dead? Now, I know a couple of people that asked Chip himself why he was asking for help and in good old Chip Coffey fashion, he didn’t respond, just simply blocked the individuals. So I, having a little

history with Chip Coffey myself, decided to send him an email. It is obvious that Chip Coffey doesn’t like me, I can tell from past correspondences and interviews I have done with him, however I must say that he has always responded back. My email was simple, it read: Hiya Chip, It’s your arch nemesis Bobby Nelson, from Strange Frequencies Radio and The Bent Spoon Magazine. I was wondering if I could possibly get a Chip style response to all the people asking “Chip is you are a psychic, why don’t you just tell the cops where Brian Harnois is?” I think it’s a fair question for people to ask. Is there an answer to this question?

I honestly thought that Chip would respond, however, I can’t say that I am surprised that he hasn’t. When you promote yourself as a psychic, but inadvertently expose yourself as a person without psychic powers, there really isn’t a response you can give. It must be said that I do know that Chip Coffey subscribes to his own Google Alerts, he has told me this personally. So I am hoping this article reaches Chip and I will continue to wait for him to gather enough courage to make a response as to why he promotes himself as a psychic but can’t use the powers he claims to have so he could find his friend.

# GUEST SUBMISSION

## Ghosts and Pop Culture

By Carolyn Dougherty

While visiting a couple of historic cities recently, I went on some ghost tours. I like history, folklore and ghost stories, so these tours are something I enjoy. I view them as entertainment, and as long as the tour guides don't try to pass themselves off as "paranormal experts" or "professional ghost hunters", I typically keep my opinions to myself - even when orbs are mentioned (believe it, or not.) I particularly appreciated one tour guide's introduction. He said ghost stories are like fish stories: just as the fish keeps getting bigger every time the tale is told, ghost stories also tend to become more embellished and elaborate with each telling. I agree. By the time we hear a version years later after the original event, the facts have become diluted, and all that is left is based mostly on imagination.

Because I am one of those "early bird" types, I usually spend some time waiting for the tour to start, so I listen in on conversations from other tourists. I paid closer attention on these recent tours and heard people say things often repeated in the paranormal community: ghosts linger because of unfinished business, places where a lot of deaths or tragedies occur become haunted, children are more sensitive to the "other side", some ghosts are confused and need help "crossing over". Because some of these good people were making these statements with such conviction, I asked if they did any ghost hunting or watched the TV ghost hunting shows. To my surprise, most said they did not. This got me thinking: if they are not watching these shows, where are they getting these ideas? Some said they had friends who were "into that stuff". Others said they had gone to psychics who told them these things. And others explained that's what they've always heard. But from where?

These ideas are not just limited to people interested in paranormal investigating, they are ingrained in our cultural consciousness. I looked back at popular movies that I watched as a kid. There. Woven into carefully crafted dialog to move the plot forward, are the seeds. Even though consciously, we know we are watching fiction, the suggestions are planted. Later, when we hear these same ideas in a different context, they "ring true" for us and are further reinforced in our beliefs.

Let's look at some well-known examples: *The Shining*, *Ghost Busters* and *Poltergeist*. These movies have become iconic, spawning catch phrases and other references in our popular culture.

*The Shining*, based on Stephen King's novel, was released in 1980. It started slow at the box office, but then gained momentum earning a profit and over the years, it has attained cult status as well as belated critical acclaim. The following is a conversation between the characters Dick Halloran, a worker for the Overlook Hotel, and Danny, a little boy with psychic powers whose "imaginary friend" "Tony, shows him disturbing images.

Dick Halloran: Has Tony ever told you anything about this place? About the Overlook Hotel?

Danny Torrance: I don't know.

Dick Halloran: Now think real hard now. Think.

Danny Torrance: Maybe he showed me something.

Dick Halloran: Try to think of what it was.

Danny Torrance: Mr. Halloran, are you scared of this place?

Dick Halloran: No. Scared - there's nothin' here. It's just that, you know, some places are like people. Some "shine" and some don't. I guess you could say the Overlook Hotel here has somethin' almost like "shining."

Danny Torrance: Is there something bad here?

Dick Halloran: Well, you know, Doc, when something happens, you can leave a trace of itself behind.

Say like, if someone burns toast. Well, maybe things that happen leave other kinds of traces behind. Not things that anyone can notice, but things that people who “shine” can see. Just like they can see things that haven’t happened yet. Well, sometimes they can see things that happened a long time ago. I think a lot of things happened right here in this particular hotel over the years. And not all of ‘em was good.

(Source: imd.com)

There is even a reference about the dangers of desecrating sacred ground. In a conversation with Wendi (Danny’s mother), the hotel’s manager, Mr. Ullman, reveals the Overlook was built on Native American burial grounds.

Poltergeist was released in 1982. Written and produced by Steven Spielberg, it was a world-wide box office success. We see a familiar formula that was actually practiced in parapsychology: scientists working with psychics on cases of paranormal phenomena.

Diane’s daughter, Carol Anne, was taken by spirits haunting their home. Diane talks to Dr. Lesh, a parapsychologist, and her assistant:

Diane: You were saying about poltergeists.

Dr. Lesh: Poltergeists are usually associated with an individual. Hauntings seem to be connected with an area. A house usually.

Marty: Poltergeist disturbances are of a fairly short duration. Perhaps a couple of months. Hauntings can go on for years.

Diane: Are you telling me that all of this could just suddenly end at any time?

Dr. Lesh: Yes, it could. Unless it’s a haunting. But hauntings don’t usually revolve around living people.

The scientist goes on to explain why some ghosts linger:

Dr. Lesh: Some people believe that when you die there is a wonderful light. As bright as the sun but it doesn’t hurt to look into it. All the answers to all the questions you want to know are inside that light. And when you walk to it... you become a part of it forever. Now, some people die, but they don’t know they’re gone.

Tangina is the psychic the scientific team brings in. She explains:

Tangina: There is no death. There is only a transition to a different sphere of consciousness. Carol Anne is not like those she’s with. She is a living presence in their spiritual earthbound plain. They are attracted to the one thing about her that is different from themselves - her lifeforce. It is very strong. It gives off its own illumination. It is a light that implies life and memory of love and home and earthly pleasures, something they desperately desire but can’t have anymore. Right now, she’s the closest thing to that, and that is a terrible distraction from the real LIGHT that has finally come for them. You understand me? These souls, who for whatever reason are not at rest, are also not aware that they have passed on. They’re not part of consciousness as we know it. They linger in a perpetual dreamstate, a nightmare from which they can not awake. Inside the spectral light is salvation, a window to the next plain. They must pass through this membrane where friends are waiting to guide them to new destinies. Carol Anne must help them cross over, and she will only hear her mother’s voice. Now hold on to yourselves... There’s one more thing. A terrible presence is in there with her. So much rage, so much betrayal, I’ve never sensed anything like it. I don’t know what hovers over this house, but it was strong enough to punch a hole into this world and take your daughter away from you. It keeps Carol Anne very close to it and away from the spectral light. It LIES to her, it tells her things only a child could understand. It has been using her to restrain the others. To her, it simply IS another child. To us, it is the BEAST. Now, let’s go get your daughter.

(Source: imd.com)

Later, Tangina declares the house “clean” of spirits, reinforcing the notion that psychics can “cleanse” homes.

Ghost Busters was released in 1984 and was both a critical and box office success. It had a hit song from its soundtrack and later a cartoon was produced. There is an array of Ghost Busters merchandise available.

While a comedy, it referred to the fact that parapsychology was studied at esteemed Universities and helped instill the notion there are “professional” ghost hunters who can help people with their haunts.

Dr Ray Stantz: [astounded] Wow! Talk about telekinetic activity, look at this mess!

Dr. Egon Spengler: Ray, look at this.

Dr Ray Stantz: Ectoplasmic residue.

Dr. Egon Spengler: Venkman, get a sample of this.

Dr Ray Stantz: It’s the real thing.

Dr. Peter Venkman: Someone blows their nose and you want to keep it?

Dr. Egon Spengler: I’d like to analyze it.

Dean Yeager: This university will no longer continue any funding for any of your group’s activities.

Dr. Peter Venkman: But the kids love us!

Dean Yeager: Doctor... Venkman. The purpose of science is to serve mankind. You seem to regard science as some kind of dodge... or hustle. Your theories are the worst kind of popular tripe, your methods are sloppy, and your conclusions are highly questionable! You are a poor scientist, Dr. Venkman!

□ Walter Peck: Exactly what are you a doctor of, Mr. Venkman?

Dr. Peter Venkman: Well, I have a PhD in parapsychology and psychology.

Walter Peck: And now, you catch ghosts?

Dr. Peter Venkman: Yeah, you could say that.

Walter Peck: And how many ghosts have you caught, Mr. Venkman?

Dr. Peter Venkman: I’m not at liberty to say.

Dr Ray Stantz: Are you troubled by strange noises in the middle of the night?

Dr. Egon Spengler: Do you experience feelings of dread in your basement or attic?

Dr. Peter Venkman: Have you or your family ever seen a spook, spectre or ghost?

Dr Ray Stantz: If the answer is “yes,” then don’t wait another minute. Pick up the phone and call the professionals...

Dr Ray Stantz, Dr. Egon Spengler, Dr. Peter Venkman: Ghostbusters.

Dr Ray Stantz: Our courteous and efficient staff is on call 24 hours a day to serve all your supernatural elimination needs.

Dr Ray Stantz, Dr. Egon Spengler, Dr. Peter Venkman: We’re ready to believe you.

(Source: imd.com)

Many other films have depicted similar ideas about psychics, the afterlife and the nature of ghosts. Some of my favorite include: The Changeling (1980), The Entity (1982), Ghost (1990), The Others (2001). Before my time, there was The Uninvited (1944), Carnival of Souls (1962), The Haunting (1963).

Stories about ghosts and hauntings are not limited to the big screen. I grew up watching various TV shows that examined the paranormal: One of my favorites was In Search of.... (1976-1982) hosted by Leonard Nimoy. (I knew him as Mr. Spock on Star Trek, so to me as a young child, he was obviously an authority on whatever topic discussed.) The introduction from an episode about ghosts in 1976 included this statement:

“Those who have studied ghosts claim to have discerned patterns in their behavior. For example, a ghost might be thought of as a spirit of someone who died in emotional turmoil. Further, it seems the spirits remains close to the place associated with the turmoil. Finally, it wanders in its restless limbo until relieved of whatever burden it is.”

Hans Holzer, noted parapsychologist and one of the most recognized names in the paranormal community even today, was featured in the episode.

Another popular show I watched regularly was Unsolved Mysteries (1987-2002). It often profiled stories about ghosts and speculations on why places were haunted. For example, a couple of homes featured had been built upon forgotten cemeteries, one family’s ghostly problems began when they brought a second-hand bunk bed into their house, or some experts suggested people weren’t seeing real ghosts at all, but having psychic experiences. Experts including parapsychologists Dr. William Roll, Dr. Barry Taft and Dr. Andrew Nichols as

well as paranormal investigator John Zaffis were often profiled in episodes. In one episode discussing the nature of ghosts, one person offering an explanation had the title “registered nurse”. I’m not sure when or where ghosts were a part of nursing school curriculum, but I guess the title made her seem more credible than “Random Woman with an Opinion”.

Other, lesser-known TV shows focused on the paranormal as well, including Sightings (1992-1997), The Extraordinary (1993-1996), and Unexplained Mysteries (2003-4). One of the problems with these shows is in some cases, the producers failed to conduct thorough fact-checking. For example, when The Myrtles Plantation was featured on Unsolved Mysteries, they told the story of a slave woman named Chloe who accidentally poisoned the wife and children of the plantation owner. But researchers have found that the wife and children actually died of Yellow Fever during an epidemic and that there is no record of any Chloe.

The ideas from these movies and TV shows nestled themselves into many viewers’ brains and beliefs. Years later, when we watch a ghost hunting show or take a ghost tour and hear them repeated, they sound “right” even though there are no facts to substantiate the ideas. According to psychologists, we humans like our beliefs; we are actually more comfortable believing than not. Michael Shermer, psychologist and author of The Believing Brain explains this is due to our brains being hard-wired to finding patterns in random data. In addition, when we feel uncertain or less in control (perhaps like when we experience something “unexplained”), we tend to see non-existent patterns even more. So when skeptics tell us there is no evidence for these beliefs and they’re not the best foundation on which to base a paranormal investigation, we don’t like it. And experiments on confirmation bias show that people prefer to believe an earlier notion, even after presented with evidence contrary to that belief. This is one source of much frustration with the paranormal community.

Investigators who claim they want to “help others” or “prove there are ghosts” can do neither if they are unable to recognize that most of the popular assertions about ghosts have no basis in fact. Physicist Stephen Hawking said, “The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge.” It is a disservice to valid research, as well as clients seeking answers, to cling to “evidence” that only fit our beliefs while ignoring alternative logical explanations. The truth might indeed be out there, but we’re much more likely to find it through critical thinking rather than pop culture.

# TAPS and Trickery at the Pasadena Playhouse

Jason Korbus



Britt Griffith, star of Syfy's Ghost Hunters and Ghost Hunters International, took the stage August 25th at the Pasadena Playhouse to deliver a lecture on ghost hunting and to do a Q&A with excited fans. Tickets to the event, originally \$30, were lowered to \$5 due to poor sales. By the time Griffith took the stage, only about 1/3rd of the available seats were taken.

After saying that he was a bit rushed and would only be able to talk for about an hour, Britt kicked off his performance by stating, unequivocally, that he never faked evidence on Ghost Hunters, nor did he ever see anyone he worked with fake anything. "I don't know how they

do things on other shows," he said. "But we never faked anything." And if that sounds like a weird way to kick off a show to you, I would agree. But roughly 35 minutes later, these words would blow up in his face.

Lou Castillo, an independent paranormal investigator in California and self-proclaimed "believer," attended the evening's festivities and reported what went on directly to me throughout the night. A longtime listener of the internet radio show and podcast, Strange Frequencies Radio, that I host along with my friend Bobby Nelson, Lou is affectionately known by us as our "West Coast Correspondent."

Britt put on an entertaining show, Lou told me. He told jokes, regaled the audience with tales from behind-the-scenes of the Ghost Hunters program and showed clips of pranks the cast has pulled on each other. He also gave advice to would be paranormal investigators, explaining why the crew uses certain pieces of equipment and warning that, should they ever be traipsing around in abandoned locations, it may be smart to invest in a carbon monoxide

detector. Later, creating a bit of an "Us vs. Them" atmosphere, Mr. Griffith gave a few of his thoughts on skeptics, pooh-poohing "what skeptics would have you believe" as it pertained to paranormal photography and EVP recordings.

What really got the audience excited, however, was Britt's buildup to a secret piece of video never before seen from one of their televised investigations. "West Coast Correspondent Lou" described it as "black and white night vision footage of a hotel where, down a hallway, what looked to be an elderly man moving right to left, then left to right" could be seen. It never made air, apparently, due to the request of the proprietors of the location itself. They felt that showing this on television would possibly scare clients away, or maybe even stir up activity at the location more.

Griffith stated that there was no one down the hallway who could have been pulling a fast one on them. Certainly no one that could have escaped the watchful eye of the video recording equipment set up. And if a skeptic tells you that it could have



been faked by the crew themselves, well remember, TAPS never faked anything while Britt Griffith was around.

It was at about this time, when the atmosphere in the Pasadena Playhouse was at its peak, that something strange happened. A light fixture which was placed up on-stage began to flicker a bit. What was happening? Was the power going to go out? Then, quickly, it moved, right around 3 inches or so and seemingly on its own, back and slightly toward the left of stage. The audience gasped and one attendee shouted out, “Did you see that? It moved!” Tension was beginning to mount and excitement at what was thought to clearly be a paranormal occurrence was at a fevered pitch.

Griffith, seemingly oblivious to the movement of the light fixture asked for details from witnesses. He asked folks to keep an eye on it and, before continuing with his presentation joked, “if it moves towards me, someone please let me know!” He pressed on with his talk, but it is easy to understand why many of the eyes in the room were focused elsewhere. Just then, mere moments after the original event, the light fixture moved again. Not quite as far this time, but certainly a noticeable distance. People began to scream once more and onlookers rose from their chairs. The room filled with the light of a dozen or more flashbulbs going off in an

effort to capture real-life paranormal phenomenon on camera.

Soon thereafter, and once things settled down, Griffith finished up with the Q&A portion of the evening and those curious about the light fixture walked up onstage to check it out for themselves. Mr. Castillo hurried to be among them. He witnessed a few people taking photographs of the fixture, but jumped in front of them to get a better look at the setup before they could start touching it. The first thing he noticed, he said, was how heavy it was; certainly not something that could be moved easily. He also noticed the base of the fixture and the thick electrical cord that was attached to it. But immediately doubts about the authenticity of the event came to his mind. The cord was stretched out as straight as could be, not at all how a cord would look if the light fixture it was attached to had moved on its own.

In that case, one would expect the cord to have some slack to it and perhaps even be in an “S” shape. And it was then that he noticed where this very straight cord led: back and to the left of stage, behind the curtain of the Pasadena Playhouse. Exactly the direction the fixture had moved toward two times earlier. Easily, Lou saw how someone could have pulled the cord from behind cover to make it appear as if the fixture was being moved by an unseen phantom.

While Lou could see all the evidence pointing to fakery almost immediately, the others folks around him couldn't. Nor, he says, would they listen to reason. While they were discussing their luck at having witnessed true paranormal activity, Mr. Castillo tried in vain to explain to them what probably really happened. In fact, he even had a suspect in mind to who pulled off the stunt. A younger blonde



woman, who he says attended to Britt throughout the evening and was possibly an employee of the theater, was suddenly nowhere to be found.

But the other TAPS True Believers (TTBs) were unswayed. Lou was told that he was taking the wrong perspective, or even just denying what they all had seen with their own eyes. “But it moved!” one said to him.

“You’re just a skeptic.” A friend of Lou’s, who was attending the event with him, stepped in at this point. Lou, he told them, was not a skeptic at all, but someone who very much believed in ghosts. And though Lou tried his best to explain to the onlookers that, while he would love for it to be real, what they had all seen was likely a very simple trick. But it was useless. The others had saw what they saw and their minds were made up. It was a paranormal event and no one could tell them otherwise. Their money was well spent.

I have seen similar instances much like Lou described to me in so-called paranormal hotspots across the country. In both private residences and public locations, “seasoned paranormal investigators” and other curious onlookers fall for obvious hoaxes or fool themselves into believing that a natural event is something paranormal. In many of those cases, the expectation of ghostly activity trumps rational explanation. But with Britt Grif-

fith and the Pasadena Playhouse, I think the fame and respect factor played in heavily. Not wanting to believe that Britt Griffith, a TAPS team member they look up to and have enjoyed watching on television, could be involved with staging paranormal activity, they ignored all the evidence that pointed toward a hoax and instead walked away believing it was genuine.

Was Britt in on the fakery? There is no way I can say for sure. Perhaps a rogue Pasadena Playhouse staff member decided to spice things up a bit. After all, the theater has a few paranormal legends attached to it and has welcomed amateur groups in before to investigate. This could have been a perfect opportunity to add to the stories. And, probably, add to the ticket price of future events as well.

What I am sure of, however, is that there was no paranormal activity involved Saturday night. But a number of people, falling victim to expectation and the loss of critical thinking in the face of someone they deem to be an authority figure, became yet another case study in the psychology behind perceived paranormal experiences.

Then again, some folks call me a skeptic. So maybe that’s just what I would have you believe. Right, Britt?

**PHOTO CREDIT: Luis Castillo**



# A PARANORMAL CHALLENGE

## BY NICK CALLIS

In lieu of the current, cookie-cutter methods of modern paranormal investigation routine, I have devised a new approach. One that will, in my opinion, garner more results than the current procedures. My hope is that a number of investigators will employ my method and return their results to the Bent Spoon, to be compiled into a future feature. You may choose to give my template to one member of your team while the rest carry on as normal.

### **Step one: Record the claim.**

Carefully document the claims of your client, making sure to identify each event singly. (If your team typically researches the history of the property, exclude any members taking place in this challenge and do not share the information with them at any point)

### **Step two: examining the claims.**

The member(s) participating now examine each individual claim, applying the following questions to each:

- 1.) What is happening?
  - 2.) What could cause this?
    - a.) What evidence supports this cause?
  - 3.) Are there any alternative ways of looking at this?
- (repeat steps 2 and 3 as many times as possible for each claim)

Once you have satisfactorily answered these questions, you will have created a hypothesis. (ex. Claim X may have been caused by Z)

### **Step three: Testing the hypothesis.**

You must now design a test that can either prove or disprove your hypothesis created in step 3.

### **Step four: Data.**

Record all of your results, including any claims that were untested. You may share them with your team, but more importantly, they should be shared with your peers. Post them on facebook or your team's website or email them to the Bent Spoon at [thebentspoonmag@gmail.com](mailto:thebentspoonmag@gmail.com)

# "Psychic Mortician" Avoids Skeptical Questioning

Jason Korbus



Mariah de la Croix, depending on where you look, bills herself as a psychic, medium, empath, and even a “sensitive intuitive.” She claims to be able to communicate both with the spirits of humans and the “energies of the animal kingdom.” For modest prices, she offers a variety of services, including, but not limited to: astrological charts, past life therapy, tarot readings, and something called personal animal totems. The slogan at LadyMariah.com is “Where answers are given...just not always the ones you want.” Unfortunately, Mariah herself doesn’t seem to be willing to answer any of my questions at all.

It all started the week before Halloween when her publicist, Liz Donatelli, emailed myself and my co-host Bobby Nelson over at Strange Frequencies Radio. She was requesting that we book her client for an interview to discuss her book, “Restless in Peace: A Psychic Mortician’s Encounters with Those Who Refuse to Rest.” In this paranormal memoir, it is revealed that Mariah de la Croix worked in several funeral homes as a mortician and embalmer and encountered a variety of spirits along the way. For instance, Mariah relates a tale of a female spirit that

left the confines of one mortuary to take up residence in her car for over a year. Another spirit, who was apparently murdered outside the mortuary, returned annually to the scene of the crime to pursue justice. Still other spirits Mariah met and communicated with were said to perform such mischievous acts as moving urns and hiding items on the roof of the mortuaries themselves. And, yes, sometimes the dead assist in their own funeral proceedings. Ms. de la Croix, it seemed to us, would make a wonderful guest for our show. We said yes and booked the date of November 4th with her publicist.

On the Amazon.com page for her book, I had been able to find out a couple names of the mortuaries she is said to have worked at. I tried googling them but couldn’t find any precise matches in Arizona, where she resides, or anywhere else with an admittedly cursory search. Because I didn’t have a physical copy of her book at the time, and her website didn’t provide much information, I wrote to Mariah personally to get a bit more background information on her story. It’s not something that is altogether uncommon for me, and it has never posed a problem before to ask a few questions so I could gather a

bit more interview material. In the interest of full disclosure, here is the unedited text of the email I sent to Mariah:

*Hi Mariah,*

*I was curious about some of the mortuaries you mentioned working at in your book. Are they in the Phoenix area? I was interested in checking them out. Thanks so much!*

*Jason*

Here was her response, also unedited:

Hi Jason,

*Thank you so very much for your enquiry, but unfortunately, for legal reasons, plus the privacy of the establishments involved and the families they serve, I can’t give you their locations. I’m sorry. I would be able to chat with you about the book, though, if there is anything else you would like to ask.*

*Mariah*

So, okay, fine. She doesn’t want to give out the locations. I was unaware that providing the cities or states they were in was a legal

concern, particularly when in much of the biographical information of Mariah online, the Phoenix, AZ area is mentioned. Judging by her response, the names of the mortuaries may very well be real. But then why wasn't I able to find them? I decided to leave it at that and just ask any further questions to her personally during the interview.

Except, that ended up being canceled shortly thereafter. We received an email from Liz Donatelli, the publicist, later that night to rescind approval for the interview. Liz claimed that Mariah felt my email to her was "inappropriate" and had decided to cancel after listening to an archive episode of our show.

I was incredulous. My email to her was in no way inappropriate. And judging by her response, she didn't think so at first either. I began to suspect that Mariah checked out our show, saw we were skeptical, and backed out for fear of tough questioning. At the time she canceled, the most recent archived episode involved us speaking about

a recent psychic failure involving a missing child. Could Mariah have seen this and decided to go into hiding?

At this point, it would seem so. I tried emailing her again directly to express my confusion. I explained that I have never had someone respond to an email query with a phrase like "thank you," as well as an open-ended invitation for more questions, only to later determine my original communication was inappropriate. I also asked Mariah to please tell me what about our show she suddenly found unfavorable. I explained to her that, in the four years we have been doing Strange Frequencies Radio, we have never had anyone, from scientist or philosopher to ghost hunter or psychic, claim that we treated them unfairly. I told her that, even in the cases where we disagree with our guests, the vast majority of the time we end up laughing and having a good time with them. The point of Strange Frequencies Radio, I said, is conversation, not confrontation. We only want the truth. I hoped my email would calm any fears she may have and that she would reconsider.

Well, I can't say that I anticipated getting a response. I assumed by that time her publicist had already told her to avoid further communication from us. As of this writing, now several days after sending that last email, she has not gotten back with me.

Later, after talking to a friend, I decided to run a search with the Arizona Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers to see if Mariah de la Croix was licensed in the state. She's not. There is no listing for

her as a funeral director, embalmer or cremationist. She's not even an intern. My friend and I have both sent messages to her on Twitter on successive days since neither she or her publicist have been responding to emails. I asked if she is using a pseudonym or is perhaps no longer licensed. The latter wouldn't be a good answer, however, since the Board lists both current and former licensees right on their website. Anyone can access them, both to verify licensure or even to see whether or not the person in question has faced any disciplinary action related to their profession. Unsurprisingly, she hasn't responded.

As of now, it has gotten to the point where I think Mariah de la Croix is hiding something. She may or may not be using a fictitious name for her psychic business and book, but then she won't divulge any information regarding the whereabouts of the mortuaries she is said to have worked at either. A quick phone call to verify her employment and spiritual encounters is all I would like to do. But since I can't find record of her even having a license to do the type of work she says she has done, I have no evidence by which to back up any of the claims she is making.

Is it all a misunderstanding that Mariah de la Croix refuses to help clear up? If so, why? Or, even worse, is her entire story built on a foundation of lies and misinformation? Only Mariah has the answers to the questions I have been asking. And it seems that, after all this time, neither her or the spirits are interested in talking.





**So my question is this....if the brain can be mapped and traced to see the electrical current that runs through the human body, much like a light bulb, even if the switch isn't thrown to illuminate light, we still can be assured that the current is still there...where do skeptics believe believe this current goes? Once the body has quit, (much like a blown light bulb) once you change the bulb the current is STILL there....So how do they explain where this energy goes?**

**-Tracy Muller**

First of all, electricity is a transmitter of energy, not energy itself, but since your question mentions both, I'll try to cover both.

The difference is, with a light bulb, the electricity is coming from the power plant, so when the bulb is replaced, the energy source continues to supply electricity independently of the bulb, but when we die, we stop eating and therefore no longer introduce the calories and proteins we need to "power" our bodies. Any remaining chemical energy in our bodies either radiates away in the form of heat or is dispersed into the ground and becomes bug and plant food. As for the body's electricity, it isn't so

much like the electricity in power lines, but charge, like when you rub a balloon on your head and stick it to the wall. As far as I understand, our body's electricity comes from sodium/ potassium pumps passing ions across your cell membranes. This stored "electrochemical energy" also leaves the body as heat. All of this is possible because the body is an open system, so energy comes and goes all of the time. The most important thing to remember is what energy is; not a substance, but quantity. It's the measurable potential of a system's ability to do work. It's kind of a strange concept to think about, but once you've grasped it, it becomes a lot less mysterious.

**How can Skeptics and Believers alike work together in the common goal of getting answers into an experience that is labeled as "Paranormal"?**

**But most importantly... Can we all just get along?**

**-Mike McKay**

Mike,

I'm glad you asked, because this is

a very important question. It is unfortunate that there has to be much contention at all between those we label as believers or skeptics. But there is actually a very simple way both sides can come together to work toward a common goal. It is simply this: respect science, and don't be afraid to ask each other questions.

Let's be honest. What we call the paranormal is full of fun stories, interesting people, and great adventures. But if we really want to find the facts and learn about the way the universe really works, we have to use science. It's the single most effective tool humans have ever devised to learn about the natural world. So, if believers and skeptics of paranormal phenomena are going to talk to each other about this subject matter, they at least have to be speaking the same language.

Let's also stop jumping to conclusions when the evidence doesn't warrant it. Not everyone who reports a ghost is a liar or lunatic, nor is something presently unexplained proof of ghosts. There is a vast area of middle ground and plenty of people much more experienced than ourselves who can help us get closer to the answers we're looking for.

That's why we talk so often about communicating with each other. There's a lot of skeptics who have a good deal of knowledge about the history of the paranormal and the related fields of science the paranormal pertains to. After all, most of us used to believe in the paranormal and many of investigate paranormal claims, too. By the same token, there are a good number of believers who have a

great deal of education in electronics, engineering and other interests that they incorporate into their paranormal research. Let's share the information so everyone can be better informed.

It seems to us that we all have a lot to learn from each other. We can't do that when we section ourselves off from one another and deal only with the people who reinforce our opinions. Sure, it's nice to be around people that believe the same things you do. But, it's an echo chamber, isn't it? And it can get a little boring. The only way we can learn is by stepping outside of our comfort zone a bit and experience new things and new ideas. At the end of the day, we're all better off for doing it.

Thanks for writing to The Bent Spoon and continuing this very important conversation. I hope this helped answer your question.

- The Founders



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